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STOCKTON -- A federal grant of \$750,000 will help the Contra Costa County Probation Department provide services to parolees re-emerging from incarceration and hopefully help reduce recidivism, according to Chief Probation Officer Philip Kader.

"Statistics show us that the first 72 hours after release are really pivotal times for our clients and we want to give them all the opportunities to make all the best choices," Kader said. This grant will help us do that."

That can include services as basic as helping parolees secure temporary housing and as vital as mental health care or drug counseling, Kader said. Probation officers will also be monitoring parolees more frequently.

The grant was announced Wednesday by Rep. Jerry McNerney, D-Stockton. The money comes from the Department of Justice's Second Chance Re-entry program and will help from the CREATES initiative, a county effort to cut recidivism by 50 percent.

"We know the best way to fight crime is to circumvent it from happening in the first place," Kader said. "(With this grant,) we'll have a better chance of giving (parolees) the skills to be successful."

Kader praised county officials for helping to secure the grant, noting that few counties nationwide are selected to receive the funds.

"We have to help people rethink how they see the world and how they make decisions," he said.

"This is our way to get our foot in the door to move in the direction toward better protecting the community."